

VZCZCXRO7131
PP RUEHLA
DE RUEHMD #0069 0121710
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 121710Z JAN 07
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1615
INFO RUEHLA/AMCONSUL BARCELONA PRIORITY 2355
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1453
RUEHMD/USDAO MADRID SP PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 000069

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
NOFORN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/11/2027

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN: DEFMIN ON SECDEF/NATO MINISTERIAL, SUB
ACCIDENT, LEBANON, AFGHANISTAN, NCIS

Classified By: Ambassador Eduardo Aguirre for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

¶1. (C/NF) Ambassador Aguirre met with Spanish Defense Minister Alonso January 11 to touch base on the upcoming visit to Seville of SecDef Gates in connection with the February 8-9 NATO Defense Ministerial. The two, who meet frequently, were to meet briefly for coffee but the session lasted an hour and a half and covered a range of issues.

¶2. (C/NF) On the SecDef visit, Alonso noted that he was eager to meet Secretary Gates, had requested a bilat, and expected it would take place in the usual manner during NATO Defense Ministerials. Alonso told Ambassador Aguirre that he did not know whether President Zapatero planned to be in Seville during the Ministerial, noting that Zapatero's schedule at this point might make his presence difficult. Ambassador Aguirre noted that planning for the Ministerial seemed to be on track based on reports from the USNATO/Embassy pre-advance team which had just concluded a planning trip to Seville.

¶3. (C/NF) The Ambassador noted that Alonso might want to conclude the on-going negotiations over the operations of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) and Air Force Office of Special Investigations (OSI) by the time of the SecDef visit. Alonso said his team was sending over a revised, far simpler and shorter MOU draft text aimed at finding a rapid and mutually agreeable solution to the issue.

(NOTE: Embassy/ODC received a fax'd copy of the new text in English and Spanish and has sent it by e-mail to OSD for initial review, and will also report by septel.) Alonso stressed that the GOS desire for an MOU was driven by public opinion concerns and the need for the government to demonstrate it has oversight over the activities of other governments in Spain. The new text, he hoped, would give the GOS what it needed for public opinion but also be flexible enough to allow the US to agree to it.

¶4. (C/NF) Alonso raised concerns about the US nuclear submarine Minneapolis-St Paul (MSP) that had docked at the base in Rota, Spain (shared by US and Spanish Navies) after an incident in British waters on December 29 in which four sailors fell overboard and two sailors died. The MSP docked at Rota on January 2 and has remained in port pending completion of the accident investigation. Alonso said the GOS wanted to a clear statement from the US, again for public opinion purposes, about whether the MSP has extended its stay because of problems with its nuclear propulsion system. (COMMENT: The GOS is sensitive on this issue because of an 2000 incident in which the British sub Tireless spent nearly a year in Gibraltar performing repairs to its propulsion system. The incident caused loud public protests in southern

Spain. During the 2003 campaign, the current government promised not to allow "another Tireless" incident if elected. END COMMENT.) Ambassador Aguirre explained that the US would expect GOS support on this matter, in the context of our regular and frequent nuclear-powered sub visits to Rota. Aguirre said the US had had taken note of the GOS's preference for the US to send nuclear-powered subs to Rota rather than the base in Gibraltar, which has been an irritant to the GOS. The Ambassador said that if Spain were going to go beyond normal agreed information-sharing requirements for nuclear powered sub visits, Gibraltar would become a more attractive alternative. Alonso reiterated his government's public opinion concerns (Note: Embassy DAO/ODC are working with NAVEUR and the GOS to resolve this matter in a way satisfactory to US information-sharing caveats related to nuclear vessels.)

15. (C/NF) Turning to regional issues, Alonso expressed concern that Spanish troops in Lebanon, numbering some 1100, are at increasing risk. He also noted that the MOD had raised the alert levels for its troops resulting from the December 30 ETA terrorist bombing which killed two people and destroyed a huge parking garage and numerous vehicles at the new wing of Madrid's Barajas airport. Alonso was also discouraged by the situation in Afghanistan, noting that the winter lull, due only to weather conditions, would not soon last. With increasingly corrupt tribal leaders, massive drug trade and increasing insurgency there, Alonso was pessimistic about the end game in Afghanistan.

Aguirre